



BECOMING A SCHOOL GOVERNOR

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in becoming a school governor. The school is currently seeking new governors who can bring energy and professional experience to contribute to the running of the school. We hope this pack will answer your questions and encourage you to become a valued member of our team.

Why should you become a school governor?

- Make a positive impact on our children's school lives and contribute to the issues that you feel passionate about.
- Develop new skills and knowledge, such as leadership, strategic planning, chairing, financial planning, and team working, that are valued by employers and can help your own career development.
- Use your skills and expertise to contribute to making our school even more effective and our local community more cohesive.

We are looking for people who are:

- **Committed** and can devote time and energy to developing themselves, and others, in order to create highly effective governance.
- **Confident** and able to lead and contribute to courageous conversations, to express their opinion constructively.
- **Curious**, with an analytical approach and an enquiring mind.
- **Challenging** conventional wisdom with the aim of making improvements.
- **Collaborative** and able to listen and work in partnership with others, building strong working relationships with the board, staff, parents and carers, students and the local community.
- **Critical** whilst being supportive and upholding positive school values
- **Creative** and innovative with new approaches to problem-solving

Becoming a school governor can be very rewarding as you have opportunities to contribute to the academic success of the school and our children's educational achievements, as well as giving something back to the community.

In addition, you will be able to improve your own professional skills and experience with involvement in strategic planning and policy making and develop your communications skills in working collaboratively and positively for the best interests of the school.

Plus, volunteering as a governor looks great on your CV and many employers actively encourage their staff to volunteer in their community!

WHAT DOES A GOVERNING BOARD DO?

Governing bodies are the strategic decision makers and vision setters in every school. They play a vital role in ensuring the best possible education for every child by creating robust accountability for school leaders. Crucially, that means using and being familiar with objective data on the performance of pupils, teachers and finances to ask the right questions and ensure resources are allocated to school priorities.

All governing bodies, have three core functions:

- 1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;**
- 2. Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and**
- 3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.**

The main areas of responsibility are to support, challenge and advise the strategic leadership team of the school on matters relating to:

- the curriculum
- children with special educational needs (SEN) and other vulnerable children
- the school budget
- staffing
- admissions (in some categories of school)
- equal opportunities
- discipline and attendance
- providing information and communications
- inspection
- health, safety and welfare
- control and community use of school premises
- organisational changes to the school

Governors should always act with honesty and integrity and be ready to explain their actions and decisions to staff, pupils, parents and anyone with a legitimate interest in the school.

The loyalty of every governor must be to the governing body and the interest of a particular group – parents, staff, a political party – this must never be allowed to divide governors from one another in their primary duty to the school and their commitment to majority decisions.

Governors are in a privileged position and often come into possession of information which in the best interests of all should remain confidential. Everything discussed at governors' meetings should be regarded as confidential. It is the published minutes which tell the outside world what has happened and nothing else.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD GOVERNOR?

It's a common misconception that all governors are 'professionals'. Although governing bodies do find it helpful to have governors with skills in particular specialist areas (e.g. finance or management skills), most members are 'ordinary' members of the public who can shine their light on school matters.

Everyone has skills – listening, peace-making, organising, being willing to learn, having a willingness to commit time and talent. A good governing board will have a mix of these skills. Specialist skills and knowledge are important, but enthusiasm and commitment are even more essential.

The main requirements are:

- Interest in education and commitment to that school
- Tolerance and ability to work with others
- Patience
- Enthusiasm
- Willingness to learn
- Willingness to spend time getting involved in the school
- A strong feeling about doing things openly and democratically.

Governors should be representative of the school community and a governing body will be all the richer for a diversity of backgrounds and beliefs.

The governing body is a group of ordinary people from the local community served by the school, bringing with them everyday experience. It can feel like a heavy responsibility but responsibilities are shared within the team. The governing body as a whole is responsible for any decisions made.

Effective governance of our school relies on having:

- The right people with the necessary skills, time and commitment, and sufficient diversity of perspectives to ensure internal challenge, all actively contributing in line with clearly defined roles and responsibilities under an effective chair and an explicit code of conduct, and with active succession planning
- Clear governance structures with tightly defined remits, particularly in relation to functions delegated to committees or other Boards
- Clear separation between the strategic and operational in terms of the role of the board and its school leaders
- A positive relationship between the board and its school leaders enabling robust constructive challenge on the basis of a good understanding of objective data particularly on pupil progress, staff performance and finances
- The support and advice of an independent and professional clerk and, in the case of academies, company secretary
- Robust processes for financial and business planning and oversight and effective controls for compliance, propriety and value for money
- Processes for regular self-evaluation, review and improvement including: skills audits, training and development plans, and independent external reviews as necessary.

GOVERNOR CATEGORIES

Every school has a governing body. It is made up of:

- parents elected by other parents at the school
- staff elected by their colleagues
- local authority governors
- governors co-opted by other members of the governing body
- the headteacher
- foundation governors

The size and makeup of a governing body is adopted in accordance with regulations relevant to the type of school. If you are interested in becoming a governor, an appointment can only be made if there is an appropriate vacancy.

You may wish to contact the headteacher, chair or clerk to the governing body for an informal chat about becoming a governor in one of the categories described below.

Foundation Governors

In church schools like ours, these governors are appointed by the founding board to represent the interests of those who originally provided the school. Foundation governors have a particular responsibility to see that the school is run in accordance with the beliefs of the founding organization, in our case the village church. In many cases there is a trust deed which lays down certain principles which must be followed.

Parent Governors

Parents, including carers, of registered pupils at the school are eligible to stand for election for parent governorship at the school.

Parent governors represent the views of parents of the school. Parent governors are nominated by other parents at the school and you should be prepared to make a personal statement explaining why you are interested in becoming a governor. If the number of nominations is the same as or less than the number of vacancies, all candidates will be elected unopposed. If there are more nominations than vacancies, an election will take place.

A person is disqualified from election or appointment as a parent governor of a school if they are an elected member of the local community or if they work at the school for more than 500 hours (i.e. for more than one-third of the hours of a full-time equivalent) in the school year at the time of election or appointment.

Staff Governors

Both teaching and support staff paid to work at the school are eligible for staff governorship. Staff governors are elected by the school staff and must be paid to work at the school; volunteers are not eligible. Any election which is contested must be held by ballot.

School staff who are eligible for election as staff governors (i.e. who are paid to work at the school) are not eligible to serve as LA governors or co-opted governors at their school. If they are paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours in a school year they are not eligible for election or appointment as parent governors. Staff can, however, vote in parent governor elections if they are parents and be governors at

other schools. Their employment status will not affect their qualification for governorships in these categories at another school.

LA Governors

LA Governors are nominated by the LA (Local Authority) and appointed by the Governing Board. Under the Local Government Act 2000, LA Governor nominations are made by the Council or the Executive.

A person is disqualified from appointment as an LA governor if they are eligible to be a staff governor of the school.

Co-opted Governors

Co-opted governors are appointed by the governing body to represent community interests. Co-opted governors can be persons who live or work in the community served by the school, or persons who do not work or live close to the school but are committed to the good governance and success of the school.

If you are interested in becoming a co-opted governor, you should complete the application form in appendix A of this document for consideration by the body of governors.

Associate Members

The governing body can appoint associate members to serve on one or more governing body committee and attend full governing body meetings. The definition of associate member is wide and pupils, school staff and people who want to contribute specifically on issues related to their area of expertise (for instance finance) can be appointed as associate members.

Associate members are appointed as members of any committees established by the governing body. They are appointed for a period between one and four years and can be reappointed at the end of their term of office. Associate members are not governors and they are not recorded in the instrument.

SCHOOL GOVERNORS AND OFSTED

In the OFSTED inspection framework September 2015, governance forms part of the judgement made for the effectiveness of leadership and management. In making this judgement in schools, inspectors will consider:

- the leaders' and governors' vision and ambition for the school and how these are communicated to staff, parents and pupils
- whether leaders and governors have created a culture of high expectations, aspirations and scholastic excellence in which the highest achievement in academic and vocational work is recognised as vitally important
- whether leaders have the highest expectations for social behaviour among pupils and staff, so that respect and courtesy are the norm
- the rigour and accuracy of self-evaluation and how well it leads to planning that secures continual improvement
- the design, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum, ensuring breadth and balance and its impact on pupils' outcomes and their personal, development, behaviour and welfare
- how well the school supports the formal curriculum with extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding and to improve their skills in a range of artistic, creative and sporting activities
- how effectively leaders use the primary PE and sport premium and measure its impact on outcomes for pupils, and how effectively governors hold them to account for this
- how well the school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain and promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith
- the effectiveness of the actions leaders take to secure and sustain improvements to teaching, learning and assessment and how effectively governors hold them to account for this
- how well leaders ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff to deliver a high quality education for all pupils and how effectively governors hold them to account for this
- the quality of continuing professional development for teachers at the start and middle of their careers and later, including to develop leadership capacity and how leaders and governors use performance management to promote effective practice across the school
- how effectively leaders and governors monitor the progress of groups of pupils to ensure that none falls behind and underachieve, and how effectively governors hold them to account for this
- how well leaders and governors engage with parents, carers and other stakeholders and agencies to support all pupils
- how effectively leaders use additional funding, including the pupil premium, and measure its impact on outcomes for pupils, and how effectively governors hold them to account for this
- the effectiveness of governors in discharging their core statutory functions
- how well leaders and governors promote all forms of equality and foster greater understanding of and respect for people of all faiths (and those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability and

sexual orientations (and other groups with protected characteristics), through their words, actions and influence within the school and more widely in the community

- the effectiveness of safeguarding
- the effectiveness of leaders' and governors' work to raise awareness and keep pupils safe from the dangers of abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism and what the staff do when they suspect that pupils are vulnerable to these issues.

QUALIFICATIONS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS

A governor must be aged 18 or over at the time of their election or appointment.

A person is disqualified from being a governor or associate member if they:

- Are detained under the 1983 Mental Health Act;
- Have failed to attend the governing body meetings for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting they failed to attend, without the consent of the governing body. This provision does not apply to the headteacher;
- Have been removed from the office of charity trustee or trustee for a charity by the Charity Commissioners or High Court on grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement or under Section 7 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions)(Scotland) Act 1990 from being concerned in the management or control of any body;
- Are included in the list of teachers or workers prohibited or restricted from working with children or young people;
- Are disqualified from working with children
- Are disqualified from being an independent school proprietor or employee by the Secretary of State;
- Have been sentenced to three months or more in prison (without the option of a fine) in the 5 years before becoming a governor or since becoming a governor;
- Have received a prison sentence of two and a half years or more in the 20 years before becoming a governor;
- Have at any time received a prison sentence of 5 years or more;
- Have been fined for causing a nuisance on school premises during the five years prior to or since appointment or election as a governor;
- Refuse to an application being made to the Criminal Records Bureau for a criminal records certificate.

A person will be disqualified if:

- His/her estate has been sequestrated (temporarily repossessed) and the sequestration has not been discharged, annulled or reduced; or
- He/she is the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or an interim order.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

How much time do I have to commit?

There are no laid down expectations but governors would be required to attend meetings (there are a minimum of 3 full governing body meetings per school year), read important papers, attend training and occasionally visit the school when it is open. Recent national research suggests governors devote around 60 hours per annum to this role; so about 5 hours per month.

Our full governing body meets 5 times a year, and governors also usually serve on a subcommittee which meets 3 or 4 times a year. You will need to set aside time to be able to be an effective governor: time to prepare for meetings, for visiting the school, and undertaking training. In return, you gain the opportunity to make a positive contribution to our children's education, develop your professional skills in management and leadership and play a part the development of our community.

A governor at our school will attend termly full governor board meetings (FGB), and probably also sit on one of two committees dealing with:

- Staffing and resources
- Teaching and learning

The term of office for all categories of governor is four years, but the governing body can decide to set a shorter term of office for one or more categories of governor. Any governor may at any time resign by giving written notice to the clerk.

What training will I get?

In becoming a school governor, you are taking on one of the most important and valuable roles in education – the strategic leadership of a school. To help you understand your role you will be given a good deal of information. It is important that you don't feel swamped by this but see it as background and reference to help you fulfil your undertaking.

Training is not compulsory but all governors, however experienced, need training to improve their effectiveness in the role and to keep abreast of developments that may affect their school and their role as governor. The Local Authority provides a portfolio of training that governors can access to help them carry out their duties effectively, and it is provided free of charge to the individual governor.

Do I get paid?

As a volunteer, the work of a school governor is unpaid. However, all your out-of-pocket expenses associated with carrying out governor responsibilities are reimbursable, including travel costs, training and babysitting.

Can I get time off work?

Governors are entitled to time off from work to carry out their role. Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 requires employers to permit employees who hold certain public positions **reasonable** time off to perform the duties associated with them. The employee and employer must agree on what is reasonable time off.

While there is nothing to prevent an employer from making payment to an employee for time off for public duties, there is no obligation for payment to be made.

What about safeguarding?

Any governor appointment is subject to satisfactory clearance by the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) and you will be asked to provide evidence of identity in order that the relevant checks can be carried out.

You will also be requested to display your lanyard when in the school on governing matters.

What if something goes wrong?

Although being a school governor may at first seem a heavy responsibility, you need to remember that an individual governor has no responsibility or power unless it is delegated to that individual by the governing body. The governing body is a corporate body of which you are a part. Personal claims against school governors are very rare indeed. Governors acting honestly, reasonably and within their powers will not incur personal liability.

What's the role of the PFA?

The role of a Parent/Friends Association is to work in partnership with the school to help provide a wide range of events and activities for children and their families to enjoy. They may also raise funds to support the development of areas or activities in addition to the normal school provision.

I'm really interested! What should I do next?

If you would like to put your name forward, please arrange to speak to the Chair of Governors or Clerk to discuss the opportunity.

We look forward to welcoming you!

For more information or to contact us please email governors@hilperton.wilts.sch.uk

If you would like to apply as a governor then please fill in the application form found on the governor's page of the school website.

[Our Governors, School Website](#)